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Peacebuilding Commission

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Peacebuilding Commission
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Report of the second mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Sierra Leone

1 to 7 June 2008

I. Background

1. At its meeting on 10 March 2008, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission decided that delegations of the Commission would undertake visits to Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. The mission to Sierra Leone took place from 1 to 7 June 2008.

2. The 14-member delegation was led by Ambassador Frank Majoor, the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Sierra Leone configuration. The delegation included the representatives of the Permanent Missions of Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Liberia and Sierra Leone to the United Nations. The representatives of Germany and Sweden participated in the delegation from their capitals. The representatives of Egypt and Germany joined the mission through their embassies in Sierra Leone.

3. The mission was successful in reaching its objectives of obtaining a first-hand view of the situation in Sierra Leone and of potential challenges to peace consolidation; engaging directly with the national Government and all relevant stakeholders concerning the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework; preparing for the biannual review of the Framework; and focusing the attention of the international community on peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone.

4. The delegation met with the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zainab Hawa Bangura; the Speaker of the Parliament, Abel Stronge; the majority and minority leaders of parliament; the Chairperson and members of the National Electoral Commission; representatives of the bilateral and multilateral partners; civil society organizations, including women's groups; the private sector; the representative of the World Bank; and representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. All stakeholders

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expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and, in particular, for convening the High-Level Stakeholders Consultation on Sierra Leone on 19 May. The delegation also had an opportunity to visit a youth employment and empowerment project in the eastern part of Freetown.

5. The members of the delegation wish to reiterate their appreciation to the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) for their kind hospitality during the visit (for the objectives, key messages, programme and composition of the delegation, see annex).

II. Main issues and key findings

6. This is a critical time for peace consolidation in Sierra Leone. The Government of Sierra Leone has set up an ambitious reform agenda. It has also reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and its partnership with the Peacebuilding Commission. Although the country remains peaceful and stable, life for ordinary Sierra Leoneans continues to be extremely difficult due to food insecurity, unemployment, lack of basic services and crippling mortality rates. Furthermore, the global food crisis and rising oil prices risk undermining the efforts of the Government to provide long-awaited peace dividends and meet the high expectations of the population.

7. Food security is now at the top of the agenda of the Government of Sierra Leone, requiring the support of the international community and response strategies that consider the overall subregional context. The Government of Sierra Leone has requested support from Brazil, Canada and the United States and has already secured a commitment from Japan for additional assistance. Importantly, several stakeholders stressed that the current global food crisis also represents an opportunity for the development of the agricultural sector in Sierra Leone and potential employment generation.

A. Youth employment and empowerment

8. The delegation observed an urgent need to bridge the gap between the population's expectations for positive change and the capacity of the Government to deliver on its commitments. These expectations are highest among young people. Although the young people of Sierra Leone are one of its greatest assets, high rates of youth unemployment and disempowerment continue to represent the most acute threat to peace and stability in the country. The Government of Sierra Leone is well aware of the challenge and is trying to put in place both policy and programming initiatives to address the situation.

9. The President's vision for youth employment and empowerment includes the creation of a national youth commission to provide the necessary focused policy direction and leadership to the many agencies and departments of the Government dealing with the issues of youth. Nationwide labour centres to invest in the country's workforce and assist in job placement are also part of the vision of the President. The centres would include training as well as placement opportunities in short-term public work schemes and support to small and medium enterprise development through microfinance opportunities and partnerships with the private

sector. These efforts would be complemented by long-term employment generation strategies and overall economic growth through private sector development.

10. The Government of Sierra Leone is committed to attracting and maintaining private sector involvement in the country. However, creating an enabling environment for the private sector requires strengthening of the judiciary and, in particular, the commercial courts, land tenure reform, and access to financing and capacity-building of indigenous businesses. Several partners, namely the Department for International Development, the European Commission, and the International Finance Corporation are actively supporting such efforts. The Government of Sierra Leone has also approached the Governments of China and India for support in the area of microfinance. The Ministry of Trade and Industry, in collaboration with international partners, is also planning to convene an investment forum in the fall of 2008.

B. Local council elections

11. The local council elections to be held on 5 July represent another milestone in the consolidation of peace and democracy in Sierra Leone. The National Electoral Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission, the Sierra Leone police and other institutions appear to be well prepared for the elections, and are supported through the elections Basket Fund, managed by the United Nations Development Programme. According to all stakeholders, the security risks for the elections are considered to be low and largely focused in the eastern and southern parts of the country. However, important electoral regulations, in particular the regulation on vote counting and tallying, are yet to be finalized and approved by the Government.

12. In general, the electoral process is well advanced, with the voter registration process and the nomination of candidates already completed. The campaigning period will officially begin on 9 June and will last until 3 July. Of 1,380 candidates for the elections, almost 17 per cent are female. A significant number of independent candidates are also contesting the elections, although 37 of the total 245 independent candidates have thus far withdrawn their candidacy. In terms of the remaining challenges, stakeholders noted the logistical difficulties, tight time frame and possible low voter turnout due to lack of sufficient voter education and awareness.

13. Following the elections, it would be critical to ensure that the Political Parties Registration Commission and National Electoral Commission receive sustained support and capacity-building. Funding for continued operations of the National Electoral Commission has been secured, whereas the Political Parties Registration Commission requires additional support after September 2008 for the work of its district monitoring groups and district forums. The National Electoral Commission is also exploring opportunities for establishing an electoral management institute to train and prepare staff for the 2012 elections. The Association of Electoral Boards of Africa has developed a curriculum for such trainings. Finally, the regulatory framework for the elections needs to be strengthened in advance of the next general elections.

C. Poverty reduction strategy paper and donor coordination

14. The Government of Sierra Leone is in the process of developing a second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper for the period 2008-2010. A draft of the paper is expected by the end of June, with a final draft ready for a Consultative Group meeting in the fall of 2008. The poverty reduction strategy paper will focus on generating economic growth and consolidating peace. The emphasis of the paper will shift from saving lives and social protection to growth creation and economic recovery. It will draw on the "agenda for change" articulated by the President at the Bumbuna presidential retreat in early January, which brought together ministers, deputy ministers and other senior officials. While recognizing the interlinkages between peace and development, the poverty reduction strategy paper will focus on growth sectors, infrastructure development and human security issues.

15. The success of the poverty reduction strategy paper will hinge on the availability of adequate capacities and resources. Drawing on previous experience, stakeholders stressed that the next poverty reduction strategy paper must be well prioritized and sequenced. There is also the need to ensure that the priorities of the poverty reduction strategy paper and the Peacebuilding Framework are mutually reinforcing and complementary. Several donors stressed the importance of ensuring broad consultations on the poverty reduction strategy paper, while also noting the time constraints and the pressure to finalize the draft as soon as possible. The absence of a poverty reduction strategy paper since January 2008 has hindered the ability of some donors to release and commit funding.

16. Since coming into office, the Government has been reviewing the existing aid coordination structure in Sierra Leone, which was headed by the Office of the Vice President and included quarterly Development Partnership Committee meetings. Consequently, regular meetings between the Government of Sierra Leone and many of its international partners have been suspended while some meetings are occurring between the Government and the four budget support donors. According to some international partners, this situation is beginning to have a negative effect on the amount of aid resources coming into the country.

17. The Government of Sierra Leone needs to finalize and communicate its decisions on the aid coordination structure as soon as possible. The donor community, on the other hand, must be guided by the Government's vision as articulated in the poverty reduction strategy paper and sector strategies and organized through an aid coordination structure and regular meetings, including informal meetings involving all partners. The international partners should further harmonize their engagement frameworks and channel their support, to the extent possible, though budget support and sector-wide multi-donor funding mechanisms. Current United Nations Development Programme basket funds need to be reviewed and enhanced to allow for greater participation by donors.

18. Furthermore, in an environment where more than 50 per cent of the Government's budget and over 80 per cent of development spending come from international assistance, it is difficult to ensure ownership and long-term planning by the Government. As a result, increasing domestic revenue generation and strengthening of the private sector, including through greater involvement of the diaspora community, have become key priorities for the Government of Sierra Leone.

D. Energy sector development

19. The delegation observed a great deal of optimism in the energy sector. The emergency energy plan is under implementation, providing a critical peace dividend to the population. The completion of the Bumbuna hydroelectric project is on course and expected by the end of 2008. The National Power Authority is restructuring and increasing its revenue generation. However, due to the rising price of oil, up to 60 per cent of the budget of the National Power Authority is directed to fuel purchase. Several stakeholders noted that with the emergency energy plan well under way, the Government of Sierra Leone should develop an overall energy sector strategy and set up a coordination structure to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the many departments and agencies involved in energy generation, transmission and distribution.

E. Justice and security sector reform

20. The delegation met with the National Human Rights Commission and was pleased to note that the Commission is now fully operational, with 28 staff members and a strategic plan to guide its work. The Commissioners called on the Government of Sierra Leone to formally set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Follow-up Committee as stipulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act. At the same time, they noted that the Government of Sierra Leone has appointed the National Commission on Social Action to serve as a focal point for the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation on reparations. The National Human Rights Commission is a member of the Special Court Legacy Committee and is actively working on ensuring that the archives of the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission are well preserved and maintained in Sierra Leone. However, most of the activities of the National Human Rights Commission, as well as the salaries of its staff, are funded exclusively through the Peacebuilding Fund. This raises concerns about the sustainability of the Commission and requires a commitment from the Government of Sierra Leone and other international partners to support its work in the long term.

21. On issues of gender equality and women's empowerment, stakeholders raised concerns about the lack of implementation of the three gender bills adopted last year. The bills are not well known to law enforcement agencies and the general public. Efforts to simplify the provisions of the bills and to conduct awareness-raising and trainings with women's groups and the Sierra Leone police and judiciary need to be supported and prioritized.

22. In addition to the urgent need to implement the gender bills, the civil society groups also stressed the need to conduct broad consultations on the report of the Constitutional Review Commission which was submitted to the President in January 2008.

F. Capacity-building

23. Capacity-building remains a top priority for the Government of Sierra Leone and must be an integral part of all international support to the country. A key role of the United Nations in Sierra Leone is capacity-building. Further efforts need to be

made in order to arrive at a common understanding of what capacity-building entails and what are the more effective ways of transferring knowledge, skills and technology to the local actors. In addition, the capacity of the United Nations itself and its offices in Sierra Leone needs to be reviewed and possibly restructured to better support the evolving programmatic and sector-wide approach of the Government of Sierra Leone.

24. The United Nations in the country is in a transitional period, which provides opportunities to strengthen its capacities, review its organizational structure and put in place an integrated peacebuilding office to support the efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone for peace consolidation. In the next few months, under the leadership of an acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations will focus its efforts on support to the local council elections, transition from UNIOSIL to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office and support the Government of Sierra Leone and other stakeholders in streamlining and harmonizing their objectives and priorities for peacebuilding.

25. On the issues of the Peacebuilding Fund, the Government of Sierra Leone and several partners acknowledged the important contributions of the Peacebuilding Fund in some critical areas, including during the 2007 elections, and support to the justice and security sectors. However, they also highlighted the challenges in implementation of some of the approved Peacebuilding Fund projects and stressed the need to address these as soon as possible. They called for a review of the Peacebuilding Fund process in Sierra Leone, greater government ownership of the projects, stronger technical review of the project proposals, and broadening of the implementation partners.

G. Subregional issues

26. Several stakeholders stressed the importance of continued analysis and review of the subregional dimensions of peacebuilding. The Presidential Summit of the Mano River Union, held in Monrovia on 14 May, and the extension of its membership to Côte d'Ivoire, were noted as positive developments in that regard. The Summit agreed on the need to convene regular follow-up meetings at the sectoral level, especially among the security sector agencies. The Summit also committed to addressing the effects of the global food crisis at the subregional level.

III. Recommendations

27. The delegation made the following recommendations:

The Government of Sierra Leone

(a) Ensure that the next poverty reduction strategy paper is not only conflict-sensitive but also provides linkages with the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. Drawing on previous experience, the poverty reduction strategy pap... should be more focused, with clearly prioritized objectives and well-sequenced and targeted activities;

(b) Ensure consultations with all relevant stakeholders on the report of the Constitutional Review Commission;

(c) Follow up on the decisions of the Presidential Summit of the Mano River Union, held on 14 May, and convene regular ministerial and sectoral meetings on issues of common concern, especially among the security actors;

(d) Finalize and communicate its decisions on the aid coordination architecture in Sierra Leone, and, in consultation with all relevant partners, develop an aid policy;

(e) Redouble efforts for domestic revenue-generation in order to reduce aid dependency and strengthen national ownership and sustainability of the reform initiatives.

The United Nations and international partners

(a) Develop a shared understanding of how best to ensure sustainability of efforts to build the capacity of national institutions, including by ensuring close coordination with the efforts to develop the private sector;

(b) Strengthen their support to the Government of Sierra Leone in ensuring implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Follow-up Committee within the National Human Rights Commission as stipulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act;

(c) Redouble their efforts to support the vision of the President of Sierra Leone for youth employment and empowerment;

(d) Continue to support the implementation of the emergency energy plan and encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to develop an overall strategy for energy sector development with a clear coordination structure;

(e) Provide critical support to the Government of Sierra Leone to mitigate the effects of the global food crisis and closely monitor the situation to ensure that it does not undermine the ongoing peace consolidation efforts, while at the same time taking advantage of the opportunities presented to strengthen the agriculture sector;

(f) Continue to provide maximum support for the elections and ensure the institutionalization of the Political Parties Registration Commission and other electoral institutions after the local council elections;

(g) Better prepare for the country-specific meetings and engage more directly with the Peacebuilding Support Office and the country-specific meeting chair on setting the agenda and preparing background materials.

The Peacebuilding Commission

(a) Support the secretariat developed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate and ensure Government leadership in the Peacebuilding Commission process;

(b) Use its international legitimacy to "speak truth to power" to the Government of Sierra Leone by stressing the need for better priority-setting and sequencing of priorities, to the international partners on the need to be more coordinated and to streamline their various assistance frameworks and to the potential donors by urging them to support Sierra Leone;

(c) Provide greater support to the advocacy and resource mobilization efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone;

(d) Advocate with the Security Council and the relevant agencies, funds and programmes, to ensure that the United Nations in Sierra Leone has adequate capacity to support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in a coherent and effective manner;

(e) With the support of the Peacebuilding Support Office, strengthen its outreach and communications efforts;

(f) Jointly with the Government of Sierra Leone at the biannual review meeting, consider adding flashpoint issues in addition to the five priority areas for peacebuilding with such flashpoint issues taking into account emerging developments such as the food crisis.

Annex

Note on the mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Sierra Leone: objectives, key messages, programme and composition of the delegation, 1-7 June 2008

I. Background

1. The Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of Sierra Leone adopted a Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework on 12 December 2007. The Framework represents an innovative instrument for partnership and mutual accountability, guided by the principles of national ownership and sustained engagement. It captures specific actions that the Government of Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission have committed to undertake in the short to medium term to address the remaining challenges for peace consolidation in the country.

2. Since the adoption of the Framework, the work of the Commission has focused on generating buy-in for and implementation of the commitments contained in the Framework, broadening the donor base in Sierra Leone, and triggering new activities or upscaling of existing activities in peacebuilding priority areas.

3. The advocacy and resource mobilization efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Government of Sierra Leone in support of the Framework culminated in a High-Level Stakeholders Consultation, held in New York on 19 May. The meeting brought together senior representatives of the Government of Sierra Leone, Member States, the United Nations, the private sector, and civil society. Participants discussed specific areas where support is required to meet the commitments contained in the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. Challenges to forging partnerships were also explored and innovative ideas for mobilization of resources, such as utilization of pooled funding and sector-wide strategies, were highlighted. The meeting also highlighted progress made by the Government of Sierra Leone in moving ahead on the implementation of a number of commitments contained in the Framework. As a result of the meeting, several stakeholders expressed commitments to continue or increase their support to Sierra Leone in line with the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework.

II. Objectives

4. At its 10 March meeting, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission decided that delegations of the Commission would undertake missions to Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. Following discussions with the Government of Sierra Leone, the mission to Sierra Leone has been confirmed for 1 to 7 June 2008.

5. The mission would have the following primary objectives:

(a) Obtain a first-hand view of the situation on the ground and potential challenges for peace consolidation;

(b) Engage directly with the national Government and all relevant stakeholders on the ground concerning the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework;

(c) Prepare for the biannual review of the Framework scheduled for 19 June;

(d) Focus the attention of the international community on peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone.

III. Key messages

6. The mission agreed on the following key messages:

(a) Commend the Government of Sierra Leone, the United Nations and all relevant stakeholders for progress made in the implementation of a number of commitments contained in the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. These successes were highlighted at the High-Level Stakeholders Consultation, held on 19 May, and must be consolidated in the next few months;

(b) Sierra Leone is at a critical phase of peace consolidation requiring continued leadership of Government and sustained and strengthened engagement of the international partners. The engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission with Sierra Leone, through the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, aims to strengthen the leadership role of the Government and broaden and enhance the support provided by the international partners for peace consolidation;

(c) The Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework is one of the primary engagement and partnership instruments between the Government of Sierra Leone and the international community. The commitments contained in the Framework are central to ensuring lasting and self-sustaining peace and must be implemented by the Government of Sierra Leone, the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations, bilateral and multilateral partners and all other relevant stakeholders;

(d) In order to ensure greater national ownership and effectiveness of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, the international support, to the extent possible, should be provided through direct budget support or through sector-wide programmes and multi-donor funding mechanisms. Existing multi-donor funding mechanisms should be strengthened and well-publicized to enable greater participation by non-resident donors;

(e) Under the leadership of the Government of Sierra Leone, additional support should be provided to broaden private-public partnerships and create the enabling environment for business sector development, domestic revenue generation and wealth creation, to ensure that peace in Sierra Leone is sustainable and irreversible;

(f) Recognizing the central role of the United Nations in supporting the Government of Sierra Leone and other stakeholders in their engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission and the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework, every effort should be made to ensure that the United Nations system in Sierra Leone has the leadership, capacity and resources to do so effectively. In that context, the appointment of an acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and efforts to strengthen the United Nations country team should be welcomed;

(g) In the context of the finalization of the poverty reduction strategy paper 2008-2010, every effort should be made to ensure linkages with the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and the work of the Peacebuilding

Commission. Regular informal meetings between the Government of Sierra Leone and the international partners could be helpful in that regard;

(h) Recognizing that youth employment and empowerment are central to peace consolidation in Sierra Leone, a prioritized, costed and coherent national youth employment and empowerment strategy should be developed under the leadership of the Government of Sierra Leone and in consultation with all relevant stakeholders;

(i) Youth employment and empowerment issues should be considered in the context of the overall economic recovery of the country and the development of the agricultural sector and the private sector in particular. The international actors, especially the United Nations, should provide timely and high-quality support and advice to the Government of Sierra Leone on the development and implementation of youth employment and empowerment programmes and policies;

(j) In the lead-up to the local council elections scheduled for 5 July 2008, every effort should be made to ensure that the elections are held on time and in a peaceful and fair manner. In this context, initiatives aimed at fostering greater national reconciliation, enhanced inter- and intra-party dialogue and greater participation of youth and women in the electoral process should be upscaled and supported.

IV. Provisional programme

Monday, 2 June

9.30 p.m.	Arrival in Freetown

Tuesday, 3 June

Time	Meeting
8.30-9.30	Meeting with the acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General
10.30-11.00	National Electoral Commission and Political Parties Registration Commission
11.30-12.45	Speaker of Parliament and Majority and Minority Leaders
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14.30-17.00	Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Education, Youth and Sports, Justice, Agriculture, Energy, Defence and Labour and Employment representatives of the Sierra Leone Police, and the Office of National Security, and the Anti-Corruption Commissioner
19.00	Dinner

Wednesday, 4 June

9.00	Field visits: YANTOL youth project, East Freetown Bumbuna hydropower construction site, northern region
19.30	Dinner hosted by acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General Michael Schulenburg

Thursday, 5 June

Time	Meeting
9.00-10.30	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone and United Nations country team
10.30-12.00	International partners and the donor community (including Mano River Union)
12.30-13.00	President Koroma
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.00	Strategic Planning Unit Office of the President and Development Assistance Coordination Office
15.30-16.00	Press briefing
19.00	Dinner hosted by Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Friday, 6 June

Time	Meeting
9.00-10.30	International Finance Corporation/Business forum Meeting with the business community
11.00-12.00	National Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone
12.00-13.00	Civil society/international non-governmental organizations/non-governmental organizations
13.00-13.45	Lunch
13.45-14.45	Debriefing with the acting Executive Representative of the Secretary-General
16.00	Depart for the airport

V. Composition of the delegation

Delegation

Frank Majoor, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations (Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration)

Milton Nathaniel Barnes, Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations

Ismat Jahan, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations

Karel Komarek, Minister Counsellor of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

José Ernesto Estrada Cerna, Minister Counsellor of El Salvador to the United Nations

Anders Wallberg, Head of the United Nations/Security Policy Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Dr. Rolf Krause, Head of Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany

Ambassador Designate to the United Nations (Sierra Leone)

Members who joined the delegation through their Embassy in Freetown or the region

Egypt
Germany
Guinea-Bissau
Russian Federation

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Sulay-Manah Kpukumu, First Secretary (Sierra Leone)
Bartjan Wegeter, First Secretary (Netherlands)
Dominik Bartsch (Peacebuilding Support Office)
Vina Nadjibulla (Peacebuilding Support Office)